

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: January 22, 2008

Reviewed by: *BP*

Subject: Ohlone Greenway Path Alignment Concept Design – Proposal to be submitted to BART

Report by: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director
Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council direct City staff and Gates + Associates to submit Concept Diagram Option A to BART for Ohlone Greenway path alignment changes, and construction scheduling requests, that include:

1. A single combined path with 2' borders of decomposed granite on either side;
2. Replacement of the existing pedestrian path with turf; and
3. Negotiations with BART to accommodate school and commercial retail schedules during the construction period.

An alternative concept design (Option B) showing two separate paths is included under the Analysis section for possible Council consideration.

Note: The Commission recommended that a proposal to narrow Marin Avenue between Masonic Avenue and Key Route Blvd. be eliminated from the concept plans. Narrowing of Marin Avenue has been removed from the plans at this time.

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Albany Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan was adopted which recommends development of a plan to rehabilitate and enhance the Greenway. BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit Authority) is currently developing plans to seismically upgrade the support columns for the above ground tracks. This will affect the Albany, El Cerrito and parts of Richmond. BART hopes to finalize the 65% plans in February. Construction is expected to start in 2009. Construction will disrupt areas within 15 feet around each column, as well as paths used for truck and equipment access. BART has acknowledged its obligation to repair or replace damage to existing landscaping and hardscape as a result of the project.

The City of El Cerrito is in a similar position as Albany and, as a result, hired Gates + Associates to prepare a concept plan for their stretch of the Greenway. Because of the

rapidly approaching BART deadlines, the City Council also authorized Gates + Associates to prepare concept plans for renovation of the Greenway for BART consideration. El Cerrito has recently submitted its path alignment concept to BART and is awaiting a response.

Although the ultimate concept plan will include recommendations on landscaping, possible plaza areas, and amenities, the immediate focus is on path alignment that is essential in meeting BART's 65% plan deadline. The Parks and Recreation Commission held two meetings to receive public input primarily for the path alignment issue on December 12 and January 10. Notices for the December 12 meeting were posted on columns along the Greenway, at city offices and on the city website. The meeting notice appears in the Contra Costa Times, and was distributed to relevant city committees, commissions, residents adjoining the Greenway, and local bicycle and pedestrian interest groups. The subsequent January 10 meeting was also posted at city offices, on the website, and distributed to local bicycle/pedestrian groups.

ANALYSIS

Parks and Recreation Commission Recommendation

The goal of this process is to obtain approval from BART to accept the path alignment recommended by the City and implement those improvements. Attached is the Concept Diagram Option A for the path alignment recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission, which includes:

- A 14' wide single consolidated AC (asphalt concrete) path in generally the same location as the existing bicycle path (Note: Existing path is 9');
- New 2' wide DG (decomposed granite) jogging path adjacent to both sides of the path; and
- Replacement of the existing pedestrian path with turf.

A consolidated trail was supported in a letter from members of the Albany Rollers and Strollers group, and would be designed to accommodate users including, but not limited to, bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, the disabled, and strollers. The Commission likened the trail to Inspiration Point in Tilden Park.

The Commission also recommended that during the construction period, BART make accommodations to school and commercial retail schedules. For example, disruption to areas around Solano Avenue should be avoided during holiday shopping seasons. In addition, BART should make efficient use of the summer months when school is not in session and many families in the community are on vacation.

David Gates, of Gates + Associates, recommends that the City put forward its preferred plan to BART, regardless of cost. Procedurally, BART will likely have their engineers evaluate the path alignment and estimate the implementation costs. The City may need to negotiate for this recommended plan.

Alternate Concept Plan

Depending on BART's response to Albany's recommendation, plan modifications or a different concept may be necessary. Attached is a Concept Diagram Option B that was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 12, based on feedback received at previous meetings. This concept includes:

- Retaining a separated pedestrian and bicycle path system;
- Straightening out the bends in the pedestrian path between Solano and Brighton Avenues to shorten the route and thereby hope to encourage greater pedestrian use;
- A new 3' wide DG (decomposed granite) jogging path adjacent to the east side of the existing bicycle path; and
- Consolidating the pedestrian and bicycle paths at the intersection corners.

According to Gates + Associates, certain user groups, such as dog walkers and blind persons, typically indicate a preference for separated paths. However, it was agreed that a widened combined path, with a 2' DG path on either side, could accommodate all user groups. This alternative concept plan may be considered by the City Council as either the preferred concept to be presented to BART, as an alternative concept plan, or disregarded entirely.

Other Non-Path Alignment Features

The concept plans show red blocks that indicate something special such as seating, plaza, landscape features, art, kiosk, etc. The locations and details of these features will be considered in upcoming Ohlone Greenway meetings. Added parking along Masonic Avenue may be considered at key locations/intersections (e.g., at Solano Avenue and at Marin Avenue across from the Library/Community Center). Issues involving retention of existing trees, removal of undesirable landscaping for the Greenway (e.g., flax), lighting, etc. will all be part of future planning for the Greenway project.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No budget has been developed for this project other than the design contract previously entered into with Gates + Associates. Development of the concept plan is intended to assist in communicating to BART any changes desired by the City that could be incorporated into the seismic upgrade project.

Attachments

Concept Diagram Option A from Gates + Associates
Concept Diagram Option B Gates + Associates
Letter from Preston Jordan, Rollers and Strollers, dated 1/10/08